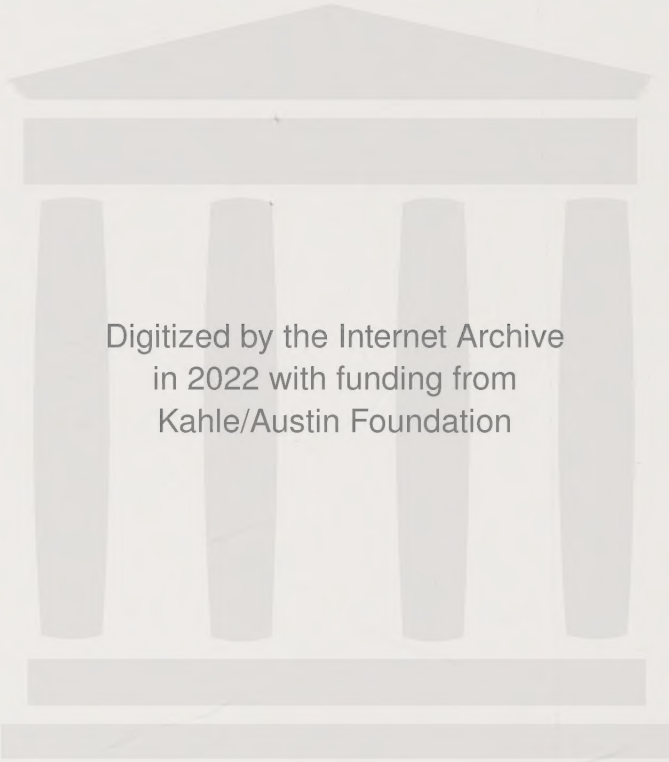


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BEAUTY AND THE BEAST



Jeanne-Marie
Le Prince de Beaumont



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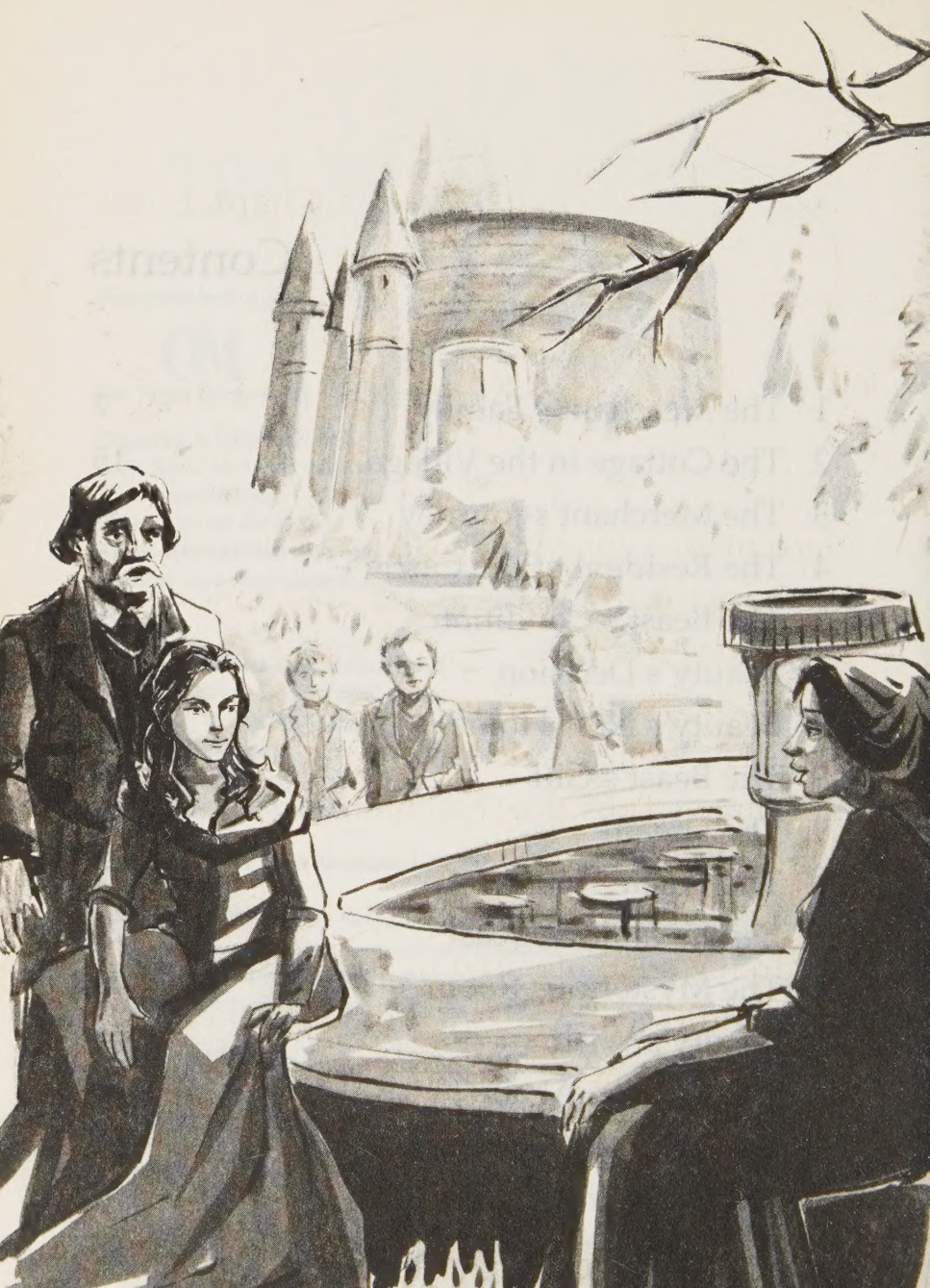
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Chapter One

The Merchant's Family

Once upon a time, there lived a rich merchant in a busy town. He was an able and honest man and traded in silk.

The merchant lived in a large mansion in the town. His wife had died some years ago due to a fatal illness. Thus, now his family consisted of his six sons and six daughters. They were handsome young men and pretty young ladies. The twelve children were quite used to their father's riches and would always demand some expensive thing or the other. The sons always wanted new tuxedos and horses; the daughters always wanted new dresses and jewels. Therefore, even the

rich merchant's enormous wealth did not prove sufficient for his children.

Then, one day, fate withdrew its blessings from the merchant. A new trader came to the town where the merchant lived and started selling silk at very low prices. All the shopkeepers of the town started buying silk from the new trader. No one wanted to buy the merchant's expensive silk.

The sad merchant returned home and told his children about his loss. His sons said, "Don't worry, Father. You still have many ships that are sailing to the other countries. They will sell silk in foreign lands and we shall never be poor!"

The merchant happily said, "True! My ships will earn money!"

However, that was not to be. That night, a terrible storm raged at sea and all the ships carrying the merchant's silk drowned. The merchant's business was ruined. He had no money!

His children were particularly miserable, for they were used to living in luxury. Now that



their father was suddenly a poor man, they were utterly distressed. The merchant, in a final attempt to save his children from discomfort, decided to sell his mansion. "I would also sell the many expensive things I have. They are of no use, but would fetch a fortune. I would buy a smaller house from the money and use the rest to revive my business," he thought.

Sadly, fate had no mercy to spare for the merchant and his children. That evening, a room in the mansion caught fire. Although the merchant, his family and several other people tried hard to put it out, but they were unsuccessful. The fire spread from one room to all the others and soon the entire mansion was ablaze. Within minutes, the merchant's last hope was burnt to ashes, before his very eyes.

The poor merchant had no option left now. He decided to move to the village and take up farming in order to survive. His children were miserable when they heard of this decision. They decided to seek their friends' help. However,



some friends made excuses, and others refused any help. Still others denied their acquaintance.

The merchant's children realised that all their friends had been close to them because of their riches. Now they knew that they had no choice, but to resort to a village.





Chapter Two

The Cottage in the Village

The merchant and his twelve children went to live in a small cottage in a village that was hundreds of miles away from the town they lived in. They were devoid of all luxuries now. The erstwhile moneyed family did not even have sufficient means to be reasonably comfortable. The cottage had only four rooms and the family had to share rooms, often finding themselves squeezed in a small place, since the merchant's children were none too small. Such was the fall of a family from extreme wealth to dire poverty!

Life in the village could not be more different than the life that the family enjoyed in the town.

Each member had to work very hard here just to manage sufficient food for thirteen people.

The merchant and his sons worked in the fields. They worked in the hot baking sun. Meanwhile, the daughters cleaned the cottage and cooked the meals. The fields were far from the cottage, so the daughters had to take lunch to the fields. There, the family would have their meal in the heat. Then, the merchant and his sons would go back to working on the fields. The daughters would return home where they cooked dinner and waited for their father and brothers.

Apart from the housework, the daughters also stitched clothes at night. Every Sunday, a local market was set up in the village, where the daughters would go and sell the clothes they had stitched. The merchant and his sons would plough, sow and harvest the crops in the fields in the different seasons.

In this manner, the family spent every day labouring hard in order to survive. However, the sons and daughters could not adapt themselves



to poverty. Every day, they would complain of the work they had to do, the little space they had and the tasteless food they had to eat. The sons were constantly upset without their horses and other leisure activities. The daughters would frequently cry about the old days, where they had pretty dresses and beautiful jewels. The cottage always housed a dreadful gloom, for the merchant's children could never get used to working like servants.

In the midst of all the despair and complains, the merchant's youngest daughter believed in being happy. Although she missed their days of happiness and wealth, like her brothers and sisters, yet she never complained about it. She always tried to be happy, merrily dancing around the cottage. She tried to make her father and siblings laugh, as she sang while working. However, her brothers and sisters were very difficult to please. Why, even the choicest horses and the most precious of jewels could not make them happy earlier! The poor youngest daughter only had her dance and songs!



All the other children would scold her for disturbing them. They thought, 'How can this girl be happy in such poor conditions? She must be fit to be a poor girl! That is why she seems good at leading a miserable life.' They even believed that this was the reason why she was ugly and dim-witted.

However, the youngest daughter was not ugly at all. In fact, she was cleverer and more beautiful than all her brothers and sisters. Indeed, she looked so pretty that she was called Beauty.

Two years passed in this manner. Fortunately, the family was now a little better off. Their harvest was good, season after season. The daughters had become very good at stitching clothes, and dresses stitched by them were in great demand at the village market. Thus, the family had sufficient money now. They had begun to get used to their condition. The merchant and his children were at peace now, and rarely missed their old wealthy life.



One day, the merchant received news that disturbed this calmness, and once again, raised hopes of wealth in the children. The merchant received a letter from the captain of one of his ships. The letter said that one ship had escaped from the storm and was now at the port with its load of silk.

Now, the family was very happy. The merchant prepared to visit the port and sell his silk once again. As he was leaving, all his children demanded various things from the money he would earn. Only Beauty remained quiet as she wondered if they would actually be wealthy ever again. The merchant asked her, "You have been quiet, Beauty. What do you want? Please tell me!"

To this, Beauty replied, "Father, I only want to see you reach home safely. However, since you insist, please bring me a rose, since I love roses so much!" The merchant kissed his children and set out on the long journey to the port.





Chapter Three

The Merchant's Journey

Sunset was nearing. The merchant's horse galloped away as fast as ever. The hopeful merchant was happy, since he had almost reached his destination, the port. "I shall stay with my friends tonight at the port. Then, I will sell the silk tomorrow morning and buy all the things the children have asked for. By tomorrow night, I will be back at the cottage. We will be rich again!" he thought, happily.

However, when the merchant reached the port at nightfall, unpleasant news greeted him. He met the captain of his ship.

The captain looked rather gloomy. The merchant said, "Good evening! Why do you sit with a long face on this beautiful night? Come let us have good food and wine to celebrate my happiness. Why, I am on my way to wealth and prosperity again!"

The captain looked at him even more sadly and said, "I am sorry, Sir. I have bad news for you. Your former companions thought you were dead. And so they divided the goods, which the ship had brought, between them. There is only enough to pay the cost of your journey!"

The merchant was heartbroken. His last hope was also gone now, and all his dreams of living a wealthy life again were shattered. He sat at the port and thought, "Oh, how wretched I am! My children loaded me with demands when I set out. Oh, what will they say when I return empty handed? I am ruined!"

However, after some time, the merchant realised that it would do him no good to sit at the port. Thus, he decided to return home.



Gloomily, he mounted his horse and began the long journey home.

The merchant rode his horse for a long time, thinking about his misfortunes and worrying about his children. He did not notice that the weather was becoming terrible. Suddenly, the merchant realised that he was riding in a thick forest. It was almost midnight and he could not see the road. He took out a compass from his pocket and tried to find the right direction, but he could not read it for it was a moonless night.

To make matters worse, it started snowing suddenly and heavily. The merchant, who had not eaten his dinner, was feeling weak. The cold made him shiver and sneeze. The weary merchant tried to find a shelter, but there was no sign of any shade in the middle of the dense forest. He could also hear wolves howling at a distance. He was very scared now. "I must hide myself, or I am certain to die in this forest!" he thought, and made his horse gallop faster.



At long last, the merchant could see a huge castle at a distance. He rode towards it. The merchant was so tired that he did not even feel afraid, and eventually reached the castle.

Despite his tiredness, the merchant could not help but notice that the castle was larger than any other he had seen. It also looked frightening in the black night. It was quite strange that no snow had fallen on the avenue that led to the castle. Rather, it was full of orange trees covered with flowers and fruit. There was actually a huge garden with a little pond on one side.

He jumped off his horse and climbed up a flight of stairs to the castle. The castle had a pair of large mahogany doors, which opened on their own, as the merchant reached them.

The merchant found himself inside a main hall. He was amazed. The floor was covered with red carpet and he could not count the number of floors it had. It seemed to hold a hundred rooms! There were heavy large curtains drawn over every window. Warm fires blazed



in fireplaces all around and the hall looked very comfortable.

However, there was a strange deathly silence inside the castle. Though it was raining heavily and thundering loudly outside, no sound could reach inside! The merchant was feeling a little afraid now. He spotted a door at the far end of the main hall. He walked through the door and saw another huge room. There was a long dining table inside. The table looked long enough to seat at least fifty people. Plates, goblets and spoons were laid out on the table and so were many bowls full of food! The merchant, no longer frightened, sat comfortably on a chair and began helping himself to the delicious food.

He ate and drank to his full. Then, he thought, "This must be a castle to help people who are lost in the forest. Many people must have lost their way in this thick forest. That is why the castle is so huge! I am sure there must be bedrooms here to sleep in too!"



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Happily, the merchant climbed a flight of stairs. He turned to his right and tried the first door he saw. The door opened into a beautiful room. There was a large bed inside; drapes were hanging on its sides and many fluffy looking pillows were placed at one end. Without thinking any more, the merchant sunk into the soft mattress, snuggled under the warm sheets and fell into a deep sleep.





Chapter Four

The Resident of the Castle

The merchant awoke from his sleep several hours later. He felt like twenty candles were shining in his eyes. When he opened them, he realised that it was the bright sunlight on his face, and he sat up quickly. The heavy curtains were parted now to reveal big, airy windows. "It must be late in the morning. The weather looks just fine. I must prepare to leave now," he thought. He got off the bed, splashed water on his face and went down the stairs.

Once again, he found himself in the huge dining room that had fed him last night. The merchant hoped that it would do the same today too. He sat on a chair at the table. As usual,

plates and goblets were already laid on the table. Dishes were placed at the centre. All of them were steaming with freshly cooked breakfast. The merchant helped himself to some cakes and fruits. He thought, 'I wish I could meet the owner of this castle. He must be so kind! I wish I could thank him.' However, no one appeared. It seemed that the merchant was the only living thing in the castle.

After finishing his breakfast, the merchant stepped out of the castle through the mahogany doors and down the flight of steps. Once again, he was amazed. Last night in the rain, when he saw the garden and the pond, they looked black and frightening. However, in the sunshine, they looked beautiful. The pond's water was sparkling blue. Small fish were swimming in it. There were also small fountains in the garden. Small, colourful birds were flying around, chirping sweetly. The garden was covered with rich green grass that looked like a carpet. There were large



trees, full of fruit. There were also many lovely flowers of all colours. A soft breeze blew gently, heavy with the many fragrances.

The merchant said aloud, "All this must be meant for me. I will go this minute and bring my children to share all these delights."

Suddenly, a rosebush caught his eyes. All roses on the bush were large and deep red in colour. They smelled so sweet! He had never seen such beautiful roses! Then, he remembered Beauty's request. She had asked him to bring a rose for her.

The merchant said aloud, "I must take one of these roses for Beauty. She will love it!"

The moment the merchant plucked a rose, he heard a dreadful growl behind him. He was terrified now. He turned around slowly. What he saw horrified him.

It was a Beast. It was huge with large teeth and nails. His eyes were red. They also looked very angry. He had long, bushy hair. The ferocious Beast growled again, this time very loudly. The merchant almost fainted with fear.



The Beast said, "Old man! I let you inside my castle when you were tired and cold. I gave you delicious food to eat and a soft bed to sleep in. And you return my favour by stealing from me! You ungrateful wretch, you think you can steal my roses?"

The trembling merchant said, "P-P-Pardon me. I am very thankful to you for providing me with shelter. I would have d-died otherwise. I did not know that you are particular about the roses ... P-Please forgive me!"

However, the Beast did not look merciful. He said, "You shall be punished, old man!"

The merchant dropped to his knees now. He said, "Alas, if my daughter Beauty could only know what danger her rose has brought upon me! Kind Sir, you do not know of my sad story. I was once very rich, but bad luck fell upon me and I became very poor. My twelve children made many demands before I left home. However, my youngest daughter, Beauty, only asked for a rose.



I was taking the rose for her. Please do not punish me for such a small thing!"

His story did not lessen the Beast's anger. He said, "Do not give me your excuses! I will kill you, because you stole from me!"

The merchant said, "But I did not mean any harm! I was only taking a flower for my child!"

The Beast was thoughtful. After a few moments, he said, "I will spare your life, but I have a condition. You have to bring one of your daughters here. She will stay in the castle with me."

The merchant gasped, "Oh, no!" But the Beast did not listen. He went on, "However, you will not lie to your daughter. You will tell her the truth that she is going to live with me in a castle. She must be brave enough to come for her father's life and live here on her own. I believe you are an honest man. Therefore, I will allow you to go home. You have one month. If you send one of your daughters by then, I will spare your life. If you fail to do that, I shall find you myself and kill you!" And the Beast went inside the castle.



The merchant was in tears now. Very slowly, he walked towards the stables and found his horse. He tried to feed it, but the horse hung its head low. It seemed that the horse was also upset.





Chapter Five

The Beast's Condition

The merchant went out to the garden. It did not look beautiful to him now. The birds chirping sounded like sad songs to him. He sat near the lake, thinking. 'Oh, how am I going to face my children, now? What shall I say to them? One of my daughters will have to sacrifice herself for me. I am not a good father!'

He sat there for a long time. He could only think of his poor daughters, one of whom would have to live in this huge, frightening castle now. He did not know how long he sat near the pond. Suddenly, he realised that the sun was setting. His stomach rumbled loudly. He had

not eaten since breakfast. Still, he did not want to eat anything.

Slowly, the merchant got up and walked up the flight of stairs to the castle. This time, he found the Beast standing by a window in the main hall. The merchant could see the pond through that window. The Beast had been watching him through the window all this while.

Now, the Beast turned and looked at him. He looked very serious, but not angry anymore. The merchant was so sad by now that he did not fear him at all. He said, "Sir, I have been thinking about what you said. I have come to say that I accept your offer. Please let me go now."

The Beast replied, "No, you will leave tomorrow morning. Go and have your supper in the dining hall now. Then, go back to your room."

The sad merchant went to the dining hall. As usual, the table was laid and food was served. He took a seat. Suddenly, a fire started blazing in the fireplace near which he was sitting. He tried to eat, but could not swallow. The food was as



delicious as ever, but the sad merchant could not enjoy it this evening.

In a few minutes, he rose from his chair and started climbing the stairs to his room. He felt very tired and sad. He stepped inside his room and softly closed the door. There was a mirror on the wall in front of him. He looked at himself in the mirror. He thought he was looking a lot older that night.

Suddenly, he heard a knock on his door. Feeling a little scared, he opened it. It was the Beast. He asked, "Did you eat well?" The merchant was amazed because he spoke very softly this time.

He answered, "Yes, kind Sir."

The Beast said, "Now, go to sleep. Do not wake up before the sun rises and the golden bell jingles. Then, have your breakfast. I have sent your horse home. You will ride home on my horse. You will find it outside the mahogany doors tomorrow morning. Go home on it. When your daughter is ready to come here after a month, my horse will bring her here."



The merchant had tears in his eyes. He said, "As you wish, Sir."

The Beast looked at him for a few moments. Then, he said, "Farewell, old man. Take a rose for your daughter, Beauty, before you leave. Remember your promise!" and he disappeared.

The merchant was too sad to think anything. Thus, he got into his bed and went to sleep. He did not sleep well and had bad dreams all through the night.

The next morning, he heard the soft ringing of a bell. He woke up. He followed the Beast's orders and ate breakfast in the dining hall. Then, he went outside and found a handsome, strong horse there. It had a shining black coat and a long tail.

He plucked a rose from the Beast's garden for Beauty, and tucked it in his belt. Then, he mounted the black horse. The horse started running immediately. It ran so fast that the merchant could not see any trees. Within minutes, he found himself outside the door of his cottage.





Chapter Six

Beauty's Decision

The merchant knocked at the door of his cottage. His oldest son opened the door. He looked tired. However, his face lit up when he saw his father. He shouted, "Brothers! Sisters! Look who it is! Ah, our days of worry are over, Father is back!"

The merchant stepped inside the cottage. He saw all his children sitting in the living room. All of them looked tired. It seemed as if they had not slept properly. All of them rushed towards their father the moment they saw him.

"Oh, Father! Where have you been? We have been worried sick!" said a daughter.

"Are you hurt? Did you fall sick?" asked another.

"No, he was busy with business in the port town. Were you not, Father? I see you have arrived on a handsome horse. Such shiny, strong horses are very expensive. You must have made a lot of gold to buy that horse!" said a son.

"True! Oh, you must have made a lot of money by now. We are rich again!" exclaimed a daughter.

The merchant looked sadly at his children. All of them looked happy, hoping to see money and gifts. He grew sadder at their sight. Then, it was Beauty who spoke to her brothers and sisters.

"Oh, he looks so tired. Let us not ask him so many questions now. He was on a long trip. Father, please change into your night-clothes. You can rest in your bed. I shall bring you some hot soup in a while. Eat it and then go to sleep," she said.

The merchant felt a little better. He left for his room. However, the other children were looking



at Beauty with disappointment. They were impatient to see their gifts. Little did they know that there was neither money nor gifts!

In his room, the merchant took out the rose from his belt. He looked at it sadly and placed it on his bedside table. Then, he changed into his night-clothes. As he was resting in his bed, Beauty brought him a tray with soup and bread.

The merchant picked up the rose and said, "Thank you, Beauty. Here is a rose. This was what you had asked for." Beauty took the rose from her father. She looked at it happily and said, "Thank you, Father! It is the most beautiful rose I have ever seen!"

He said, "You do not know what this rose has cost me, little one. This rose may look beautiful, but is a devil inside."

Beauty was shocked. She said, "Why would you say such a thing, Father?"

To this, the merchant replied, "There is something I want to tell all of you. Call your brothers and sisters here."



Soon, Beauty had called all her brothers and sisters to their father's room. All of them were very excited, hoping that their father would be distributing his newly earned wealth among all of them. However, the merchant had no such announcement to make. Instead, he told them about his stay in the castle, the Beast and the terrible condition the Beast had put on him.

All his children were shocked. They were disappointed, for their dreams of being wealthy again, were now broken. To make things worse, one of them had to leave now and stay in the ferocious Beast's castle. The daughters felt that it was Beauty's fault, because she had demanded a rose from their father.

Beauty was the first to speak. She said, "All this would not have happened had I not asked Father to bring me a rose. Thus, I agree it is my fault. I should go to the Beast's castle."

All the others shouted at once, "No! You shall not go anywhere! We all will hide in another



country. The Beast will not be able to find us there!"

The merchant's sons said, "Father, you or Beauty should not return to this terrible castle. We will kill the Beast, if it should come to fetch you."

The merchant said sadly, "No. I had promised the Beast and I will have to fulfil it."

Beauty too had made up her mind. She began preparing to live in the Beast's castle. She collected all her belongings in her room. Then, she divided them among her sisters. She said good-bye to all she knew and loved in the village.

When a month was over, Beauty was ready to ride to the castle. She said good-bye to her brothers and sisters. The merchant was the saddest, for there was no way he could save his daughter from going to that awful castle. However, Beauty did not cry. She and the merchant stepped out of the cottage.

It was very cold outside. Together, they mounted the Beast's horse. Once again, the horse



ran at great speed. It seemed to fly. A short while later, it reached the castle. The merchant saw the thick forest and the castle. This time also he saw it in the dark.

However, unlike last time, as he stepped inside, the entire castle lit up. He could see light in every window. The garden was also lit. Mysterious light came from the trees, as if they were glowing. There were burning torches at the top of every fountain. A blue glow came from the pond. Soft music was playing from somewhere. It seemed to come from all directions at once. It was a beautiful song, but it also sounded sad.





Chapter Seven

Beauty's New Home

Beauty looked around. Her father had been frightened of the castle the night he had found it. This was also a moonless night and it was extremely dark. However, tonight, the castle did not look frightening at all. It looked grand and beautiful to Beauty. Her eyes were huge with amazement. She looked at the tall towers, the beautiful garden and the clear pond. She felt as if it was a magical land.

Then, Beauty listened to the song. It was sweet and full of sorrow. The song reminded Beauty that she had left her family behind and would now have to live with a stranger, the Beast. This

thought brought tears to her eyes. She thought, 'Oh, you castle of magic! You are the dream of many a King! I, on the other hand, feel so sad seeing you. I do not want to live here in exchange for my lovely family!'

Beauty wiped her tears quickly check, for she did not want her father to see her crying. Then, she turned to him and said, "The Beast must be very happy tonight, because he has decorated his castle so beautifully. Maybe he knew we were coming!" She smiled a little.

The merchant looked at her sadly. He tried to convince her yet again and said, "My child, please do not do this. Do not sacrifice yourself for me. I am an old man; I will die sooner or later. Let the Beast kill me! You, my girl, have a long life to live. Do not waste it!"

However, Beauty was firm in her decision. She said, "Father, I will never let the terrible Beast kill you. Please do not say such things."

Once again, she looked around. This time, her fear was lesser and she admired the castle.

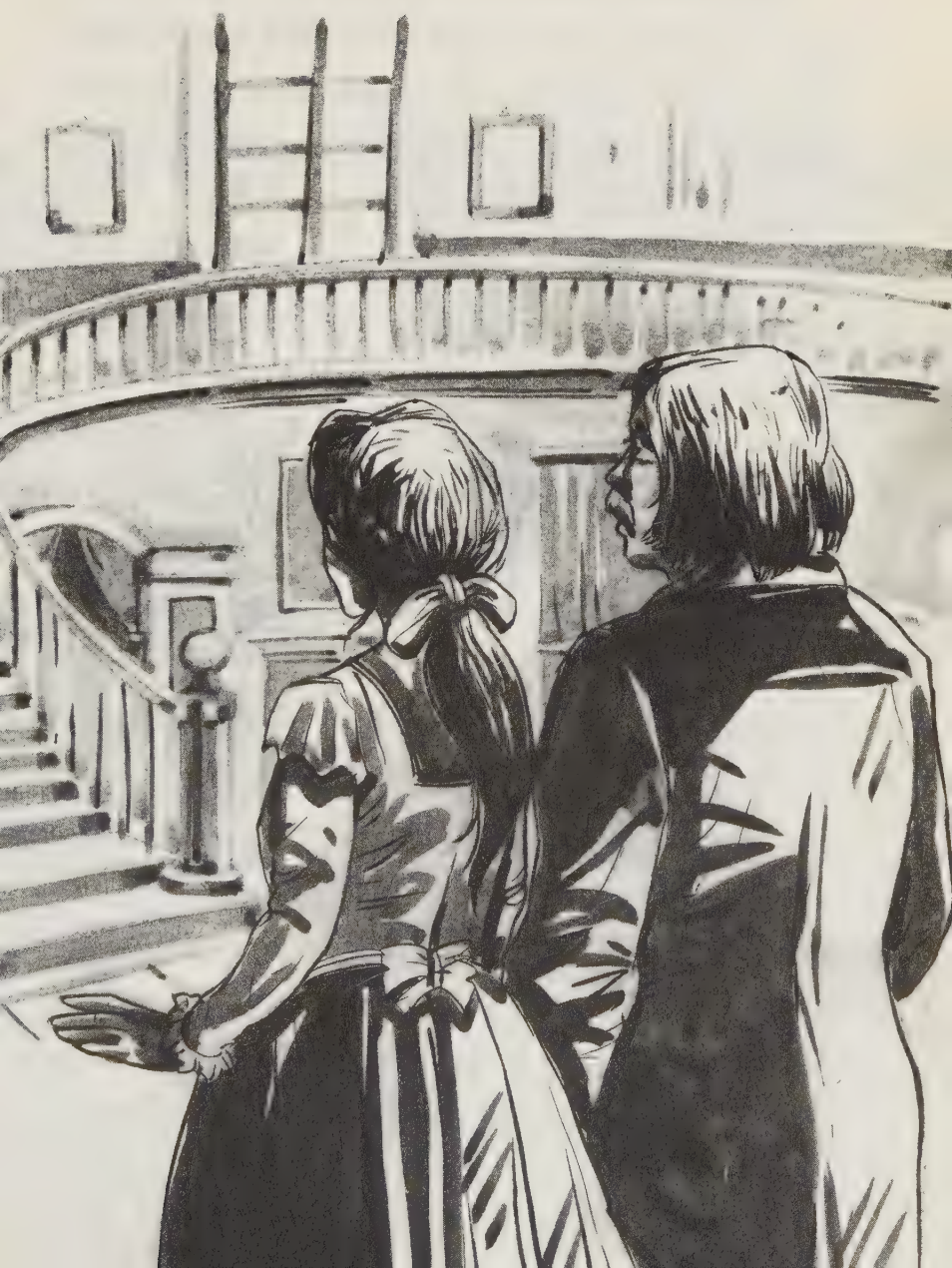


"This must look so pretty in the morning, in the sunshine! Come Father, we cannot stand here forever. Let us go inside the castle. Perhaps the Beast is waiting for us there," she said.

Thus, they walked up the steps that led to the mahogany doors of the castle. The merchant felt sadder with every step they took, for he would soon have to part with his dear daughter. Beauty, on the other hand, looked around her, as they walked. She had never seen such a splendid place. Although she was sad about leaving her family, she also wanted to explore this interesting place. Who knew what wonders lay there!

Now they were inside the castle, standing in the entrance hall. It was empty. They could no longer hear the song. The merchant, who was familiar with the place, said, "Perhaps the Beast is in the dining hall. Let us go there."

Beauty was looking at the many flights of stairs and the hundreds of rooms very keenly. Slowly, she followed her father into the dining hall.



The dining table was laid and dishes were placed at its centre. The merchant knew what this meant, for he had been here before. He said, "The Beast wants us to have supper first. Sit, my child." Thus, the two sat at the dining table. Beauty was quite hungry after the journey. She felt comfortable near the warm fire, eating this delicious supper. She thought, "Maybe the Beast is not so terrible, after all. It is kind of him to provide the warm fire and the food." She was less afraid of the Beast now.

They had almost finished eating. The merchant did not know what to do next. However, he did not need to worry about that, for they heard footsteps as soon as they had finished. Beauty, who had been feeling less afraid earlier, suddenly felt afraid. In the next few moments, the Beast had entered the dining room and was standing before them.

Beauty trembled upon seeing the Beast. She moved close to her father, trying to hide behind



him. The Beast, who looked very serious rather than angry, glanced at Beauty.

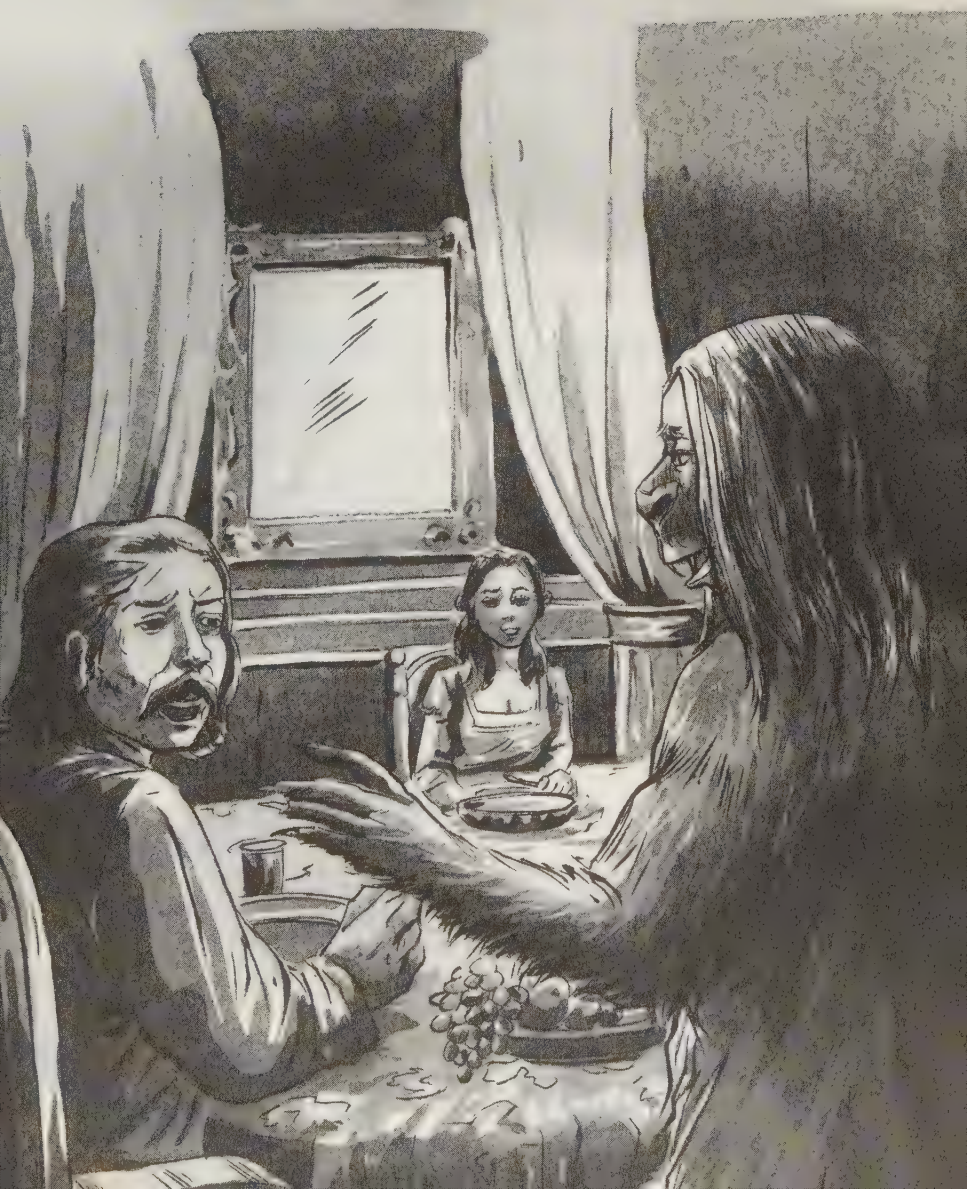
"Good evening, old man! Good evening, Beauty!" he said.

This frightened her even more. However, she felt that it was being disrespectful to her host. Thus, she tried to fight her fear. She stood before the Beast and said, "Good evening, Beast."

The Beast looked less serious now. He even looked a little kind. He looked at Beauty for a few moments. This frightened her again, but she did not show her fear. Then, he said in a loud and bold voice, "Do you know why you are here, Beauty? What did your father tell you?"

Beauty replied bravely, "Yes, Beast. He did not lie to me. I know that I have come here to live in this castle."

Beast said, "You are a brave girl. I am pleased with you." And turning to the merchant, he added, "Old man, you will leave this castle tomorrow. As usual, you will not wake up before the sun rises and the golden bell jingles. Then,



have your breakfast and ride to your home on my horse. You will not come back here!"

Then, he again spoke to Beauty, "Take your father to the second room on the first floor. There, you will find two travelling trunks. Fill both the trunks with everything you want to send to your brothers and sisters. Bear in mind that you fill them with the things that they should like. Make sure that you send them something very precious as a remembrance of yourself."

Then, the Beast walked through door and was soon out of sight.





Chapter Eight

The Beast's Gift

Beauty and the merchant began climbing the flight of stairs. She was thinking of what the Beast had said. Her father would leave in the morning, leaving her completely alone with the frightening Beast in this huge castle. Beauty was very sad now. She was almost in tears. She blinked, fighting tears with all her might. She knew that her father would take her back, if she cried.

They reached the first floor. The merchant opened the door of the second room. He had thought that the room would be the same as the one he had slept in, a month earlier. However, he was wrong. He gasped as he opened the door.

The room was larger than any other he had seen. The merchant thought, "Good gracious! Five cottages like the one I live in could fit in here!" It had a ceiling so high that he felt as small as an ant in the room. It had six walls instead of four. They were pure white and had large windows. Presently, heavy golden curtains were drawn over these windows. A large bed was placed along one of the walls. It had pale golden sheets of silk.

Then, they saw huge cupboards along another wall. Two travelling trunks were also placed beside them, just like the Beast had told them. Beauty walked across the room towards the cupboards. She looked at the pure white room and felt a little peaceful. However, when she opened the cupboards, she had to cover her eyes with her hand. She had never seen so many colours together in her life! The cupboard was full of colourful, sparkling jewels. There were sparkling diamonds, blood red rubies, glittering green emeralds and shiny blue sapphires. On one



side, there were large, fat bricks of gold. When Beauty's eyes adjusted to the sparkle of the jewels, she opened the next cupboard. It was full of colourful, pretty dresses. They were in different styles, fit for a queen.

Beauty and the merchant her father were very happy now. Their days of poverty were finally over! Beauty sat down on the floor. She selected hundreds of dresses for her sisters. After folding them neatly, she placed them near the travelling trunks. Then, she carried as many jewels as she could in her hands. She placed them near the second travelling trunk.

However, the cupboards did not seem to get empty. Each time Beauty took something out, the cupboards seemed to fill themselves again with dresses and jewels. This went on for a long time. Then, the merchant looked at the mountain of clothes and ornaments near the travelling trunks. He said, "Beauty, my dear, look at the riches you have put here. The trunks are small and these things will not fit inside the trunks."



Beauty replied, "You are right, Father. I have an idea. Let us put these dresses and jewels back in the cupboards. Then, we shall fill the travelling trunks with bricks of gold. They will be more useful because you can earn a lot of money by selling them. Then, you can buy dresses, jewels and anything my brothers and sisters want."

The merchant agreed to this. Thus, the two opened the travelling trunks and filled them with bricks of gold. However, the bricks did not seem to fill the trunks. Beauty happily said, "Oh, how wonderful! The cupboards won't empty of riches and these trunks won't be quite full of riches! Let us put the dresses and jewels inside them too, Father!"

Thus, the two put everything they wanted inside the trunks. Still, the trunks only seemed half full. Finally, they closed the lid of each trunk. The merchant said, "Let me take these trunks outside and load them on the Beast's horse." However, he could not lift the trunks, for they were too heavy.

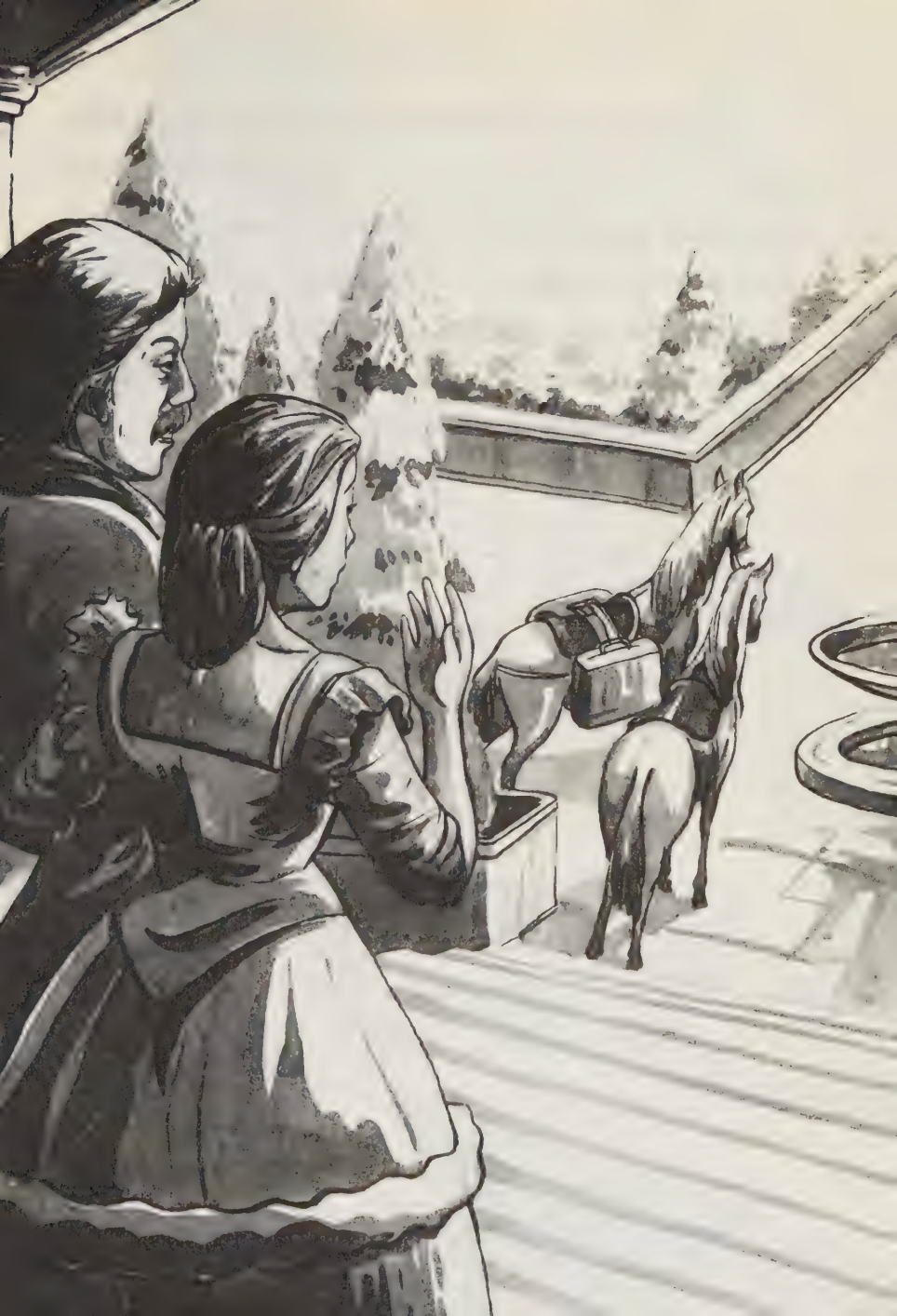


The merchant use all his strength, yet he could not lift either of the trunks. He said, "Alas! The sly Beast played a trick on us! He knew that I would not be able to carry these trunks. He must be having a good laugh in his chamber!"

However, Beauty said, "Father, I do not think that the Beast meant to dupe us. Everything in this castle is magical. Therefore, we should not be fooled by anything we see. Let us wait till morning."

Thus, Beauty and her father went to their room and slept. The next morning, the jingle of the golden bell woke them up. They went to the dining hall and ate breakfast. Shortly after they had finished eating, a bell rang. "It must be time for me to go," said the merchant.

The two went outside in the garden. To their surprise, two horses stood in the garden. Both the travelling trunks were loaded upon the back of one of the horses. The merchant smiled a little and said to his daughter, "You were right, after all."



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

The merchant and Beauty looked at each other sadly. Then, the merchant mounted the horse. It started galloping, as if flying. Soon, the horse and its rider were out of sight. Still, Beauty kept standing in the garden, staring in the direction where the horse ran. She had a feeling that she had seen her father for the last time.





Chapter Nine

The Dream

Beauty began to cry. For the first time, since arriving at the castle, she felt truly alone. She kept standing like a statue for a long time. She kept on looking in the direction of her village and cried. Some time later, Beauty realised that the weather was getting cold. The breeze was cold and Beauty shivered.

Slowly, she wiped her tears with her scarf. Then, she turned around and began walking towards the castle. Last night, the castle had amazed her. She had found it very interesting and wanted to explore it. However, today, she felt differently. Her father was gone and she did

not know, if she would be able to see her family again. Beauty cried bitterly. The garden looked empty and the castle seemed sad and gloomy. She no longer wanted to look into all its rooms. Who knew what she would find there? Perhaps the castle held more beasts! Maybe there were dragons, too. Beauty trembled at these thoughts and felt more scared than ever.

She had reached the mahogany doors. The moment she passed through the doors, all fires started blazing in the fireplaces of the entrance hall. Beauty stopped shivering at once, for the hall was very comfortable and warm. However, she did not wish to stay there. She was already missing her family. Thus, she walked on, towards the dining hall.

As Beauty entered the dining hall, many wonderful and delicious smells greeted her. Despite her sorrow, Beauty felt hungry. She went near the table and saw that lunch was served. She noticed that all the dishes were her favourites! Beauty helped herself to some food and found it



tastier than anything she had ever tasted! Also, there was no sign of the Beast. Thus, by the time she finished her lunch, Beauty felt a lot better. She was no longer crying after the delicious meal. She also felt less afraid, since the Beast was nowhere in sight. She thought, "Maybe he will just keep to himself. I shall be happy to be on my own. It will be lonely without my brothers and sisters, but I shall find activities to keep busy with."

Thus, Beauty began climbing the flight of stairs. She reached the first floor and thought, "The Beast had asked Father and me to stay in this room, last night. Perhaps, I am to live here only!" She tried the door of the second room.

The door unlocked as she touched it. Beauty went inside the room. It looked the same, as it had the night before. There were pure white walls, heavy golden curtains and silk sheets on the huge bed. The travelling trunks were no longer there, as her father had taken them for her brothers and sisters. Apart from this, there was one new thing in the room. There was a small wooden table,



placed beside her bed now. On it stood a large vase made of glass. It was full of the roses that grew in the Beast's garden. Each rose was large and deep red in colour. Beauty sat on her bed, looking at them. She said to herself, "Perhaps I am not alone here, after all. I believe I shall be cared for here. Oh, these roses are so beautiful!" And she smiled a little and counted them. There were twenty roses in the vase.

Suddenly, Beauty realised that she was very tired. She had been too sad and scared to sleep properly the night before. She yawned and lay on her bed, closing her eyes. She could smell the sweet fragrance of the roses. Within minutes, Beauty had fallen asleep.

Then, Beauty had a very strange dream. She dreamt that she was in a large field. It was covered with soft, green grass. She was wearing a long white dress and walking barefoot in the field. There were dew drops on the grass. It was so soft that she felt like walking on a carpet made of wet cotton. The sky was light blue in colour with



lots of white clouds. The sun was peeping from behind a group of clouds. It was very bright and its warm rays fell on Beauty's face. The wind was cool and it softly blew Beauty's hair. She felt very peaceful and happy. She walked slowly in the green field, enjoying the beautiful scenery.

Suddenly, a brook appeared before her. It was the longest brook Beauty had ever seen. She could not see where it came from. It seemed to flow all around the earth. Its water was so clear that Beauty could see her reflection in it, almost like a mirror. There was a floor of little pebbles in pink and green colours under the brook. All pebbles looked golden when the sun's rays fell on them. There were also little fish swimming in the brook. They were of every colour Beauty could imagine — blue, purple, pink! Beauty was so amazed by this sight that she could not look away from the brook!

When she finally turned around, she was even more surprised. Many trees had appeared along the brook now. All of them were huge and shady.



Their leaves were sparkling green. Beauty sat under one such tree. She looked at the brook again and thought, "This is the most beautiful place in the whole wide world! Oh, surely, I must be in paradise! I wish I could live here forever!"

However, as soon as Beauty wished she could live there forever, she heard some noise behind her, as if someone was crying. At once, she looked in the direction of the sound. She saw a man sitting under a tree, far away from her. His neck was bent low and he had covered his face with his hands. Thus, Beauty could not see who he was. However, she could tell that he was a man of royal blood. He wore fine clothes and had a long sword tucked in his belt.

Beauty stood up and walked towards the tree, where the man was crying. She sat beside the crying man and said, "Why do you cry so? What is the matter? Maybe I can help you."

At her words, the man looked up. Beauty had thought right - this man was indeed a Prince! He was the most handsome man she had ever seen.



He had golden hair and kind blue eyes. When he spoke, Beauty thought that the Prince had a sweet and gentle voice also! He said, "Ah, Beauty! You are the cause of my sorrow!"

Beauty was shocked. She said, "Oh, how do you know my name, Prince? Please tell me, how I have caused you sorrow. I promise, I shall correct my mistake!"

The Prince said, "I know you, dear one! I love you dearly, but you do not love me! You think that I am cruel!"

Beauty replied, "No, my Prince! I do not think so. I am telling you the truth."

The Prince shook his head and said, "No, you believe that you are very unlucky, for you had to part with your family. However, you are wrong. Whatever you suffered elsewhere, will be now recompensed here. All your dreams will be fulfilled in this castle. You can be very happy here. Please, do not think that ugly people are bad and beautiful people are good. This may not always be true! I stay in the castle,



but I look different. Please find me and rescue me, Beauty!”

Beauty said, “Oh, I will, Prince! Please tell me how!”

The Prince replied, “Do not feel too sad! You are very kind, Beauty. Please stay kind and gentle. Please save me from my ill fate and never leave me!”

Beauty wanted to tell the Prince that she would never leave him, but suddenly, he disappeared. Now, in the Prince’s place stood a tall and beautiful lady. She wore sky blue robes and stood straight. At once, Beauty felt respect for the lady. The lady said to her, “Dear Beauty, do not miss your village too much. Your future is very bright and happy, but that will happen only if you try to make this castle your home. Remember, do not trust people based on the way they look!”

Beauty was listening to the lady with interest. She wanted her to go on speaking, but suddenly, the lady looked hazy. The green field, the brook and the trees also appeared unclear now. Beauty



shouted, "Prince! Ma'am!" but in vain. Slowly, the entire place was full of fog.

Now, Beauty could hear the jingle of a bell. Someone was softly calling her, "Beauty! Beauty!"

She opened her eyes and sat up. The clock in her room was calling her name. She wanted to go back to the green field, but she was awake now. The dream was over.





Chapter Ten

The Castle

Beauty was completely awake now. She looked outside the huge windows and saw that the sun was setting. 'I must have slept for a long time. It is almost dinner time,' she thought. Suddenly, she noticed a new piece of furniture placed in her room. There stood a large dresser along the wall, right in front of Beauty. On top of it was a huge oval-shaped mirror. Beauty got out of her bed and walked towards the dresser.

On coming closer, she saw that the dresser table was made of fine wood. Another vase was placed on its top. This too, was full of roses from the Beast's garden. The dresser had three drawers. She

opened the first drawer, and found it full of hair brushes of different shapes and sizes. Beauty took each brush in her hand and loved all of them.

Then, she closed the first drawer and opened the second drawer. It contained tens of tiny little glass bottles. Each bottle was of a different colour. Beauty took the red bottle in her hand. It was a rose perfume! Then she smelled the white bottle. It was a lily perfume. Beauty smelled each bottle. Every bottle contained the perfume of a different flower. There were purple, pink and orange bottles. Beauty thought, "Oh! These perfumes must be taken from the flowers that grow in the Beast's garden. They smell so sweet!"

Now, Beauty closed the second drawer and opened the third one. It contained the most beautiful hair ornaments Beauty had ever seen. There were little flowers, butterflies, colourful ribbons and buttons. Beauty wanted to use these things at once! She thought, "These must be for me. This castle truly is magical. I get everything



I love, here, without even saying a word. How wonderful!"

Thus, she used the hair brushes. Her hair shone as she brushed it. Then, she decorated it with the ribbons and flowers. She also wore the lily perfume. Then, she went to the cupboards from where she had taken dresses and jewels for her family. She opened them and saw that they still contained clothes and jewellery. However, this time, the things were better and prettier than the ones she saw last night! Beauty felt like a queen. She selected a pink gown and put it on.

Then, she went downstairs, her beautiful gown flowing behind her. Inside the dining hall, she saw that dinner was served. All dishes were her favourites again! She sat and quietly ate her meal. She thought that the Beast would also join her for dinner, and that had made her a little uncomfortable. However, the Beast did not show up.

Beauty finished her dinner and thought, 'Perhaps the Beast will not appear before me.'



Thus, she walked out of the dining room. This time, she did not climb the flight of steps towards her room. Instead, she went to the entrance hall. As usual, warm fires were blazing in the fireplaces here. She saw a sofa and sat on it. It was very soft and Beauty comfortably sunk in it.

Then, she began thinking of the dream she had. She thought, "The Prince said that we could be happy together. He also said that I could rescue him. But how? Maybe the terrible Beast has held my Prince a prisoner. He must have locked him up in one of the rooms in this castle! Also, the Prince told me not to trust people based on the way they look. The beautiful lady also said the same thing. But I do not understand what all this means!"

Then, Beauty sat straight. She said to herself, "Wait! It was all in my dream. How can I be sure that the Prince and the lady were real? It was only a dream. I should not trouble myself over it. Oh, I must find something to keep myself busy in this castle. Otherwise, I will go mad with nothing to

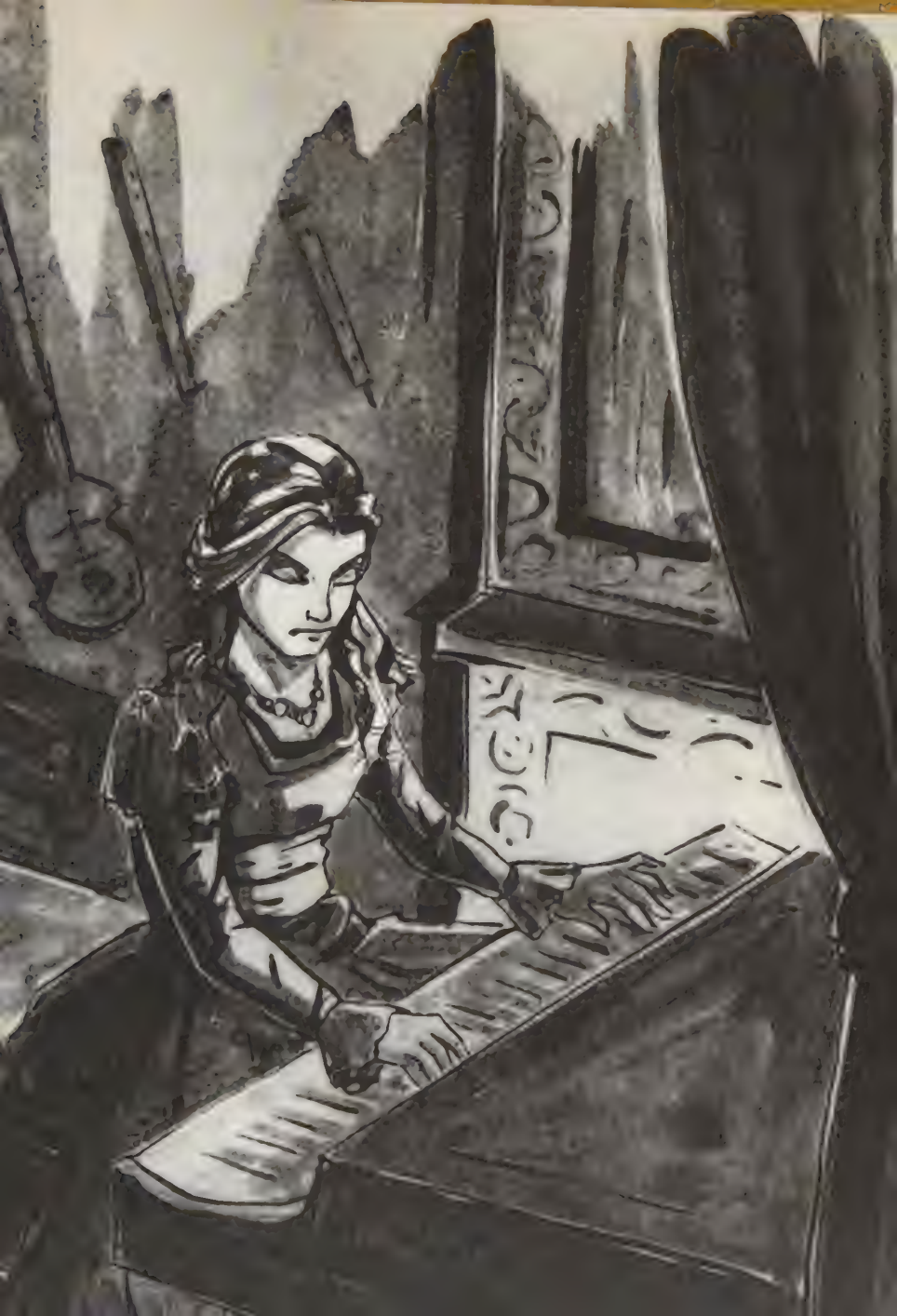


BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

do and no one to talk to!" Then, she stood up and started climbing the flight of stairs.

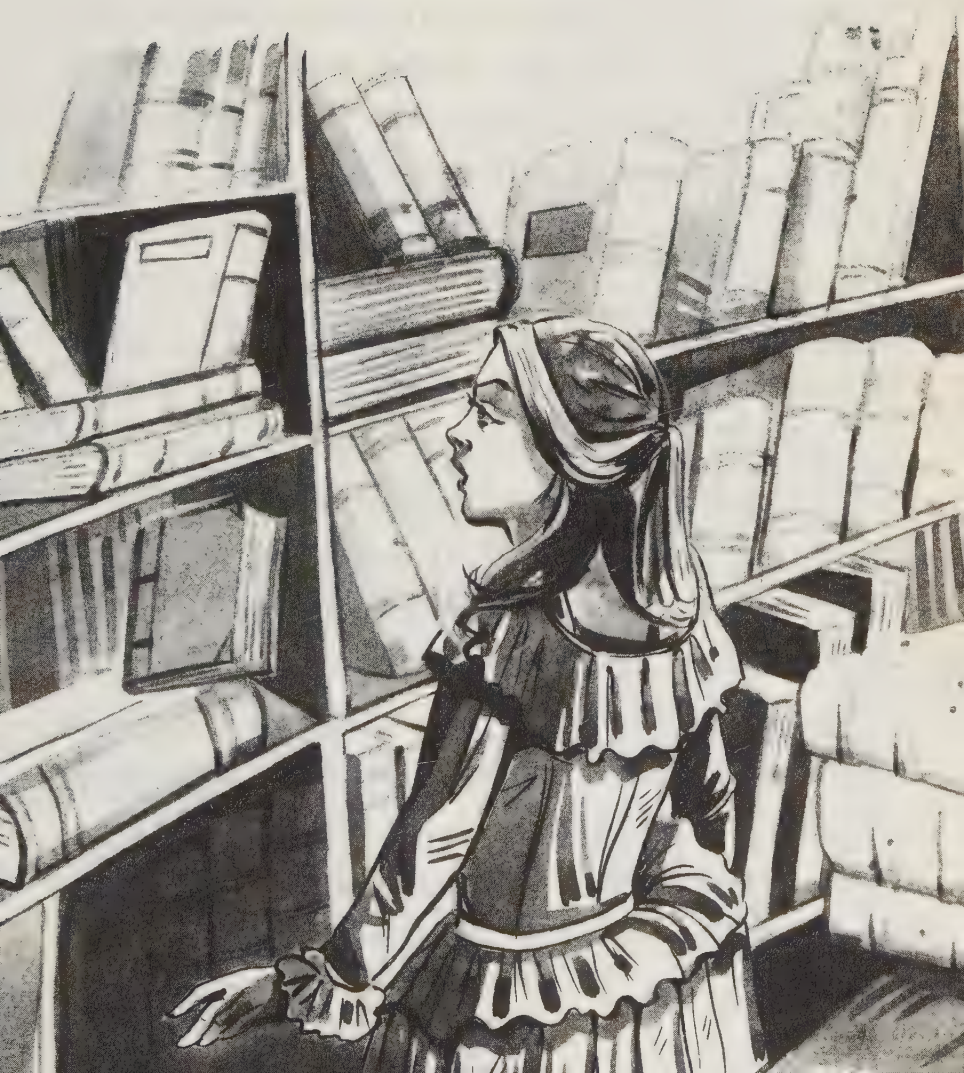
She did not stop at the first floor, but continued climbing, till she reached the second floor. There, she saw that this floor also looked like the first floor, with many doors leading to many rooms. She opened a door and found herself inside a room that was not as large as her own room. But, when Beauty looked around, she felt happier than she had felt in many days. The room was full of musical instruments! There were more instruments than Beauty could imagine. There was the piano, the harp, the flute and the guitar, among hundreds of other instruments.

Beauty ran to the piano and started playing her favourite tune. Soon, she was singing along, too! She felt happy, like she was in the village with her family. There also, she would sing and dance, asking her brothers and sisters to sing with her. She played the piano for a long time. Then, when her fingers started aching, she stopped playing. Very carefully, she learnt the room's location, for



she wanted to come back and play these musical instruments every day.

Now, she climbed another flight of stairs and reached the third floor. She thought, "It would be lovely if I found an interesting room on this floor, too!" and opened a door. What she saw next, took her breath away. This was the largest room Beauty had seen. It was even larger than her own room. All its walls were covered with racks, so tall, that they reached the ceiling of the room. Every inch of the racks was covered with books. Beauty gasped. "Oh! These must be all the books in the world!" she exclaimed. She started reading the titles of the books, for she wanted to take a book to her own room and read it there. However, there were so many books that she realised it would take her months to only read the titles of the books. All the books interested her and Beauty wanted to read them all! Suddenly, she realised that it was dark outside. She decided to return in the morning and stepped out of the room.



Beauty started walking down the stairs. She wanted to go to her own room and sleep. However, as she reached the second floor, she noticed a door that looked different from all other doors. It was a large cream coloured door. It also looked extremely old. "How come I did not see this door before?" she wondered. Out of curiosity, Beauty opened the door.

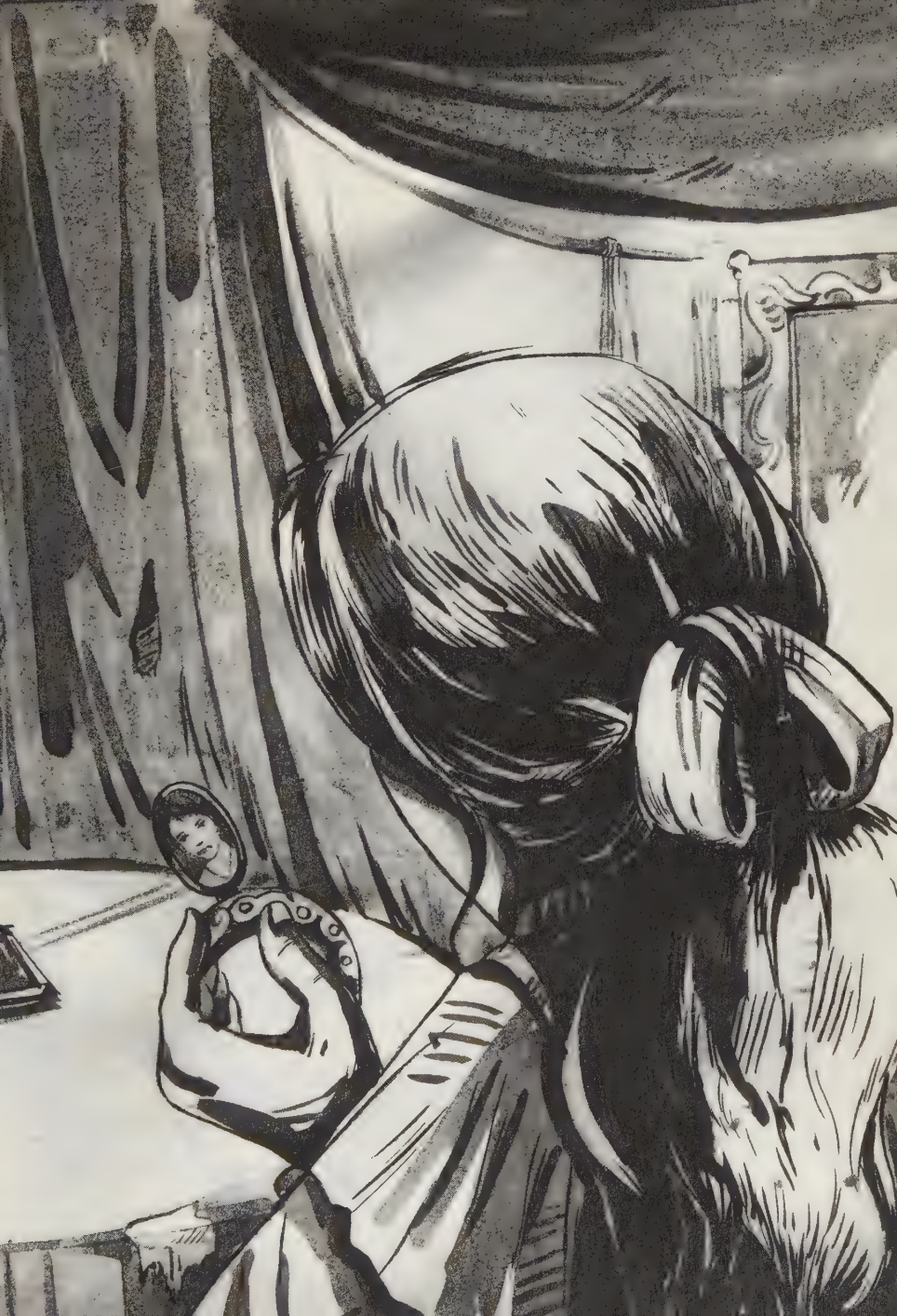
Inside the room, she could not be sure of the size of the room, for all the walls were covered in mirrors. Beauty saw herself reflected in all the mirrors. She was fascinated. As she walked inside the room, she saw that there was a narrow passage through one of the walls. "This room has two doors, perhaps. Where does this passage lead to?" she thought and walked through it.

Through the passage, Beauty found herself inside another room. However, this room was not as beautiful and interesting like the previous ones. In fact, this room looked old and dusty. On an untidy table, something shiny was kept, that caught her eye. It was a pretty bracelet! Beauty



picked it up and saw that a picture was hanging from the bracelet. When she looked at it, she saw that the picture was of the Prince she dreamt of! Happily, she put the bracelet around her wrist.

She picked up a candle and carried it further inside the room. On its last wall, Beauty saw a huge painting. Her charming Prince smiled kindly at her from the beautiful painting! Now she knew that her dreams were real.





Chapter Eleven

Beauty and the Beast

Very slowly, Beauty walked back to her room. She did not remember entering her room and slipping into her bed, for she could only think of the dream and her Prince. Her Prince really existed! He was real and Beauty had to rescue him now. Thinking these things, Beauty fell asleep. She was very tired and slept soundly. She did not have any dreams that night.

In the morning, she heard the sound of the golden bell. The clock in her room called out her name, "Beauty! Beauty!"

Beauty woke up. She looked around and saw that the roses were still there on her bedside table

and the dresser. She was amazed to find that the roses still looked fresh and new. "They must be magical roses that never dry up! Why, they smell ever so sweet!" she thought.

She got out of her bed and got dressed. Today, she wore a long green dress. Like the evening before, she used the ornaments and perfume from the drawers of her dresser. She looked at herself in the large mirror and smiled. She was thinking of her Prince. She said to herself, "He asked me to try and be happy here. I must feel happy in order to rescue him!"

Then, Beauty went down the stairs to the dining hall. Her favourite breakfast was served there. There was no sign of the Beast this morning too. Beauty ate her breakfast and started climbing the stairs. Today, she already knew where she would go. She reached the second floor. She remembered where the room containing the musical instruments was. She opened the door and there they were! Same as ever, hundreds of instruments to play and sing along with! Beauty selected a flute and



put it in her pocket. Then, she stepped out of the room and walked downstairs.

She walked out of the palace and reached the garden. "I do not know where the green field of my dream is, but this garden is also beautiful!" she thought. She sat near the pond and dipped her feet in the water. It was not cold and it was not hot. The water was cool and comfortable.

It was a beautiful morning. The sun was shining warmly. The birds were chirping and the fish in the pond were swimming peacefully. The wind was filled with the scent of the flowers of the garden. The water of the pond and the fountains sparkled, when the sun's rays fell on them.

Beauty took the flute out from her pocket and began to play it. The flute had such a sweet melody that soon Beauty forgot where she was. She closed her eyes and listened to herself playing the flute. It was such a sweet tune that even the animals were enchanted. The birds stopped chirping and started singing with the music of Beauty's flute. The fish of the pond gathered near



Beauty's feet and listened to her. Even the water of the fountains and the pond seemed to flow to the sound of the flute!

Beauty played for a long time. At long last, she felt hungry and tired. She stopped playing the flute and opened her eyes. She felt wonderful. She looked at the birds and the fish and said, "Ah! Music truly is magical!"

Happily, Beauty walked towards the castle. By now, she knew that her lunch must be laid on the table in the dining hall. She reached the dining hall, sat on a chair and saw that she was right. A delicious meal was there, waiting for her. Beauty quietly had lunch and started climbing the stairs. This time, she went to the third floor to the great library she had seen the evening before. The huge room was still full of books! Beauty selected a book and returned to her room.

Inside her room, she sat down on her bed and started reading the book. It was about the stars and the sky. Beauty found the book so interesting, that she forgot about time. So, when she looked



up from her book, she was surprised to see a dark sky outside her window. "It must be time for dinner!" she thought and hurried downstairs.

In the dining hall, her supper was served. Beauty sat there, eating peacefully. By now, she knew that the Beast would not join her for meals or anything. But, she was wrong this time. She had only just begun eating her food, when she heard footsteps. Beauty immediately felt nervous. She was afraid that the Beast would now eat her up!

However, when the Beast arrived, she saw that he did not look angry at all. There was no expression on his face. He sat on a chair across Beauty and said, "Good evening, Beauty."

Beauty felt relieved. She politely replied, "Good evening, Beast."

Then, the Beast asked her, "How do you find my castle? Do you find it interesting, or do you feel unhappy here?"

Beauty was again reminded of her Prince. He had asked her to try to be happy. She replied, "Oh



no, Beast! I am not unhappy. I looked into some rooms here last evening. I saw the most amazing musical instruments and the most interesting books!" She did not tell him of the room full of mirrors.

The Beast then said, "Yes, I heard you in the afternoon. You played a wonderful tune in the garden."

Beauty was pleased. She said, "Thank you, Beast! Your garden is so beautiful that anybody would be enchanted there!"

By now, they had finished their supper. Beauty thought, "The Beast is not terrible, after all. He does not seem to want to eat me up! He does not seem cruel, either."

Suddenly, Beast said, "Do you love me, Beauty? Will you marry me?"

Beauty was shocked upon hearing this. She said, "Oh! What can I say?" She was afraid that the Beast would get angry if she refused.

The Beast said, "Do not be afraid. Say what you want to."



"Oh! no Beast! I cannot marry you!" said Beauty, for she loved her Prince.

Without sounding angry, the Beast said, "Good night, Beauty." Then, he disappeared into a dark corridor.

Beauty was shocked, but she was also glad that the Beast did not get angry. She went to her room and went to sleep.

That night, she dreamt of the green field again. Her Prince was there. However, he still looked very sad. He said, "Oh, Beauty! Why are you so unkind to me? You do not love me! Ah, I have many more sad days to wait."

Beauty said, "Oh, no! I love you, my Prince!"

Before she could say anything else, her dream ended. It was morning and the golden bell was jingling. Beauty woke up. Without thinking anything, she went out of her room and climbed the second floor.

There, she went to the room of mirrors and walked inside the other room through its passage. There it was — the large portrait of the



Prince. Beauty stared at it. Now she was sure that the Prince of her dreams was indeed the one painted here.





Chapter Twelve

The Mysterious Room

Beauty walked back towards her own room. She was lost in thought. She thought of the Prince's words. She thought, "He asked me to be happy here. He also said that I should not be too taken in by looks. The beautiful lady also said that. Why, then, did the Prince say, that I do not love him? Oh, I will rescue him!"

Thinking these thoughts, she wore a peach skirt. Her flute was lying on the dressing table. She put it in her pocket, for she wanted to play it in the garden again. Thus, she went to the dining hall and began eating breakfast. She thought that maybe the Beast would come, but he did not.

Beauty was quite alone in the room, perhaps in the castle. "What does the Beast do all day?" she wondered.

As she got up to go to the garden, Beauty saw the corridor where the Beast had disappeared last night. It was always dark. However, today, bright light seemed to be coming from it. "Oh, where is this light coming from? I must go and see!" she thought and walked towards the corridor.

From the dining hall, it had looked like a short corridor. However, as she walked through it, she found that it was a very long corridor. Beauty walked on. It was lit by the light that came from the other side. At long last, she could see its end. Beauty ran towards the light.

She was so amazed that she gasped. At the end of the corridor was the green field she had dreamed of! It was exactly like her dream. The large green field was there and so were the beautiful endless brook and the huge trees that stood along it. Beauty was very happy now! She thought that she would meet her Prince here.



She ran through the field calling out, "Prince! Prince!" However, there was no one there. Her Prince was not there. Beauty was wrong. She searched for him for a long time and then sat down under a tree. She thought, "Oh! The Beast always returns to this place! He must have held my Prince a prisoner here! That is why I see him here in my dreams."

Beauty was sad now. However, she was also determined to rescue the Prince. She walked back through the corridor and to the dining hall. Then, she walked upstairs to the third floor. She wanted to visit the library and look for books that may help her rescue the Prince. However, on the third floor, Beauty opened the wrong door by mistake, as she was so lost in her thoughts.

When she entered the room, she saw that it was not the library. However, she was again amazed. The room was full of little things that Beauty loved to work on! There were silk cloths, colourful threads, needles, ribbons and buttons.



Beauty thought, "Oh! I can stitch clothes and make flowers from these things. It will be just like stitching at home in the village! I wish this room were closer to my room. Then, I would not have to climb so many stairs. I would then stitch any time I want!"

As soon as Beauty wished this, a door appeared in one of the walls of the room. Beauty opened that door and, to her surprise, found herself inside her own room! She exclaimed, "Goodness! This castle can read my mind and fulfil all my wishes!"

She walked to her room and saw a pretty blue Robin sitting on her dressing table. She said, "Good evening, Beauty." Beauty was surprised! She had never seen a talking robin. She replied, "Good evening, pretty little bird!"

Thus, the two began talking. Beauty was delighted to find a friend in the castle. She took the Robin with her to the dining hall to have lunch. The two ate together and talked happily. Then, Beauty went to the garden with the Robin



and the two friends sang together. Beauty was so happy that she thought she could live with the Robin forever!

However, when Beauty asked her to join her for dinner, the Robin said, "Forgive me, Beauty. I cannot come with you for dinner. I shall wait for you in your room. Come soon!" and she flew to her room's window.

Beauty went to eat her supper alone. However, as soon as she began to eat, the Beast arrived and said, "Good evening, Beauty."

The two talked like the previous evening. Beauty was less and less scared of him now. After dinner, the Beast again asked her, "Do you love me, Beauty? Will you marry me?" Again, Beauty quickly replied, "Oh! No, Beast!"

Thus went Beauty's days at the castle. She would read, stitch and play music. The Robin would talk to Beauty and be her friend all the time. However, she would not go to the dining hall to have dinner.



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Every evening, the Beast would join Beauty for dinner and ask the same question, "Do you love me, Beauty? Will you marry me?"

Every evening, Beauty would say no.

Every night, Beauty would dream of her Prince. He would ask her to rescue him, but Beauty could not understand how he could be saved. Meanwhile, she also noticed that the Beast looked sad these days. Every evening, after Beauty would say 'no' to him, he would go away looking sadder than before.





Chapter Thirteen

Beauty's Wish

Beauty was now comfortable and peaceful in the castle. She would never feel dull there, for the castle was so huge! Every day, she would look into its rooms and find something new and interesting.

There was one room, which Beauty did not find magical like all the other rooms of the castle. This room was on the seventh floor. It was a large room. It had seven walls. There was a large window on each wall. A chair was placed under each window, such that it faced the window. However, the strange thing was that thick maroon curtains were drawn over all its windows. Beauty could

only see the room through the light of the candle she carried. Many times, she would try to part the curtains and see through the room's windows.

However, despite parting the curtains, she could not see anything as the windows seemed to be made of black glass.

Beauty often wondered what the room was for. She knew that it must be magical, for every room in the castle was magical. She wanted to find out the magic of this room, too.

One such day, Beauty was walking through the castle's seventh floor. She walked for a long time and was very tired. She wanted to go to her own room and rest. However, she was too tired to walk down to the first floor. She thought, 'The chairs in that huge, dark room look very soft. I will go there and rest.' So, she stepped into the room. As usual, there was very little light in the room. Beauty walked to the nearest chair and sat on it.

Suddenly, the curtains of the window she was facing, parted. The window was no longer black! Beauty could see through it. There was a



stage outside it. Then, some people appeared on the stage. There were men and women wearing beautiful dresses. However, Beauty could not see their faces, as all of them wore white masks. The men's masks had handsome faces on them. The women's masks had long eyelashes and rosy cheeks painted on them.

There was a dim blue light on the stage. Then, music started playing and more lights shone on the stage. The men and women turned out to be dancers! They performed the most beautiful waltz dance Beauty had ever seen. At the end of their dance, Beauty clapped loudly for them, saying, "Bravo! Bravo!" She wanted to talk to these great dancers, but could not. The curtains were back on the window as soon as their dance ended.

Now Beauty understood this room. She said to herself, "This must be the room of entertainment! Each window must have a stage. Oh, I wonder what other dances I can see here!"

However, she returned to her own room soon after, for she was hungry and sleepy.



The next day, she returned to the room of entertainment, after lunch. This time, she sat in a different chair. At once, the curtains of the window it faced parted. Beauty was right. There was a stage there, too! It was lit with a soft blue light. Again, men and women wearing smart dresses appeared. They were still wearing their masks. Soft music began to play on the stage. Beauty was eager to see the dance.

However, she was wrong. They did not dance, but performed a play about a princess who falls in love with a cart driver. Beauty felt very happy. She had never seen such a beautiful play. She cried happy tears at the end of the play and clapped for the actors. When they disappeared and the curtains were drawn on the window, she thought, 'Oh! How I wish to talk to these people! They are great actors, despite the masks they wear!'

So, Beauty started visiting this room every evening. She sat on a different chair each time. After the play, she listened to an orchestra playing

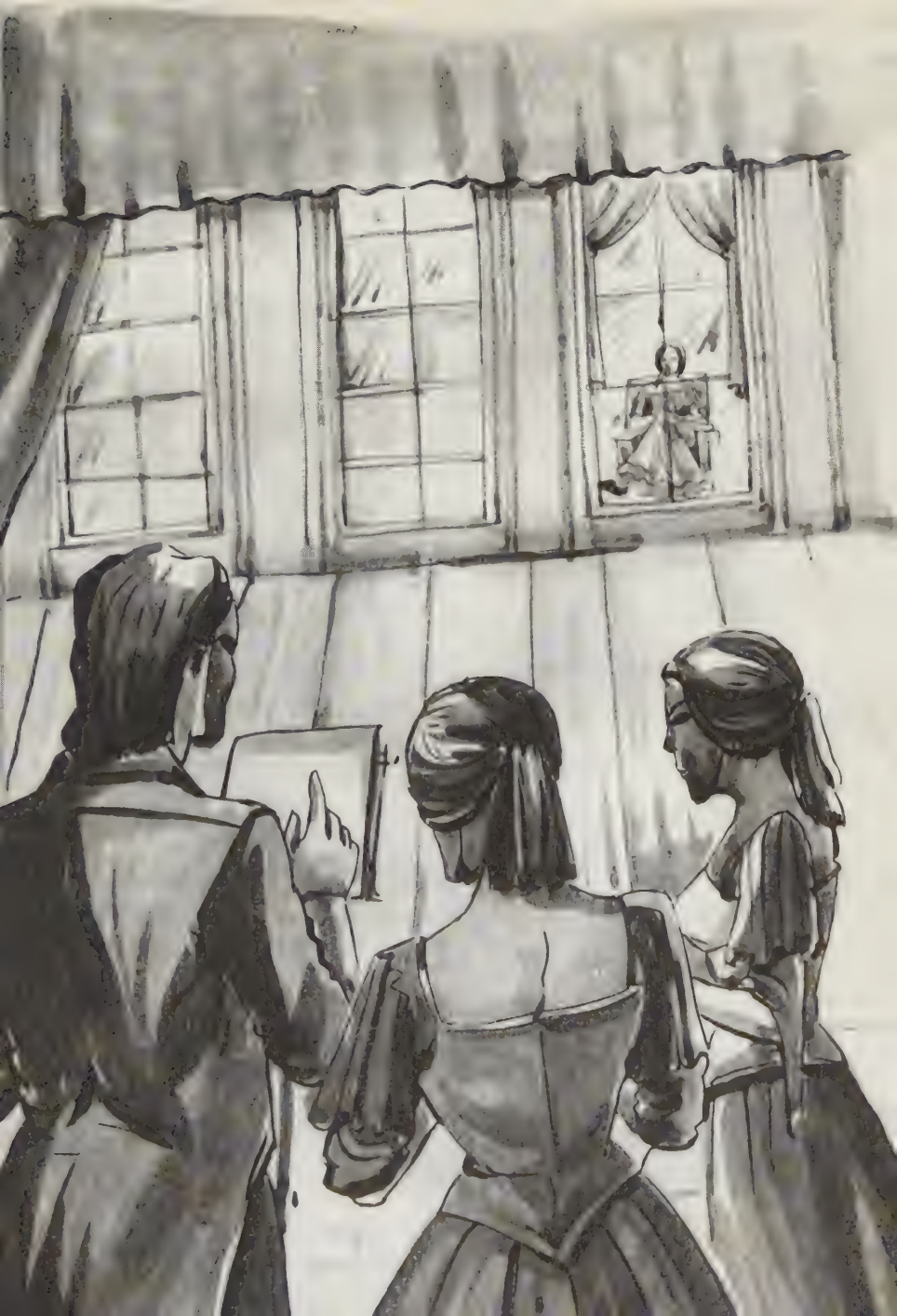


the sweetest songs she had heard. One evening, the men and women read out her favourite poems to her. But, they always wore their masks and never showed their faces.

At dinner time, she would tell the Beast about the room. He would listen to her. Sometimes he would smile. Each night, she would ask him, "Oh, Beast! Do tell me who these wonderful people are!" But he would only smile sadly at her. Beauty wondered why the Beast was so sad. By now, she was sure that he was neither cruel, nor terrible. She was not afraid of him anymore. She knew that even though he looked frightening, he had an extremely gentle heart.

He would still ask her the same question every night, "Do you love me, Beauty? Will you marry me?" Beauty would still say, "No, Beast." Although she still had dreams of her Prince, she was sure that the Beast had not locked him in the castle.

One such evening, Beauty sat in the room of entertainment. The curtains parted, but only one



woman appeared on the stage. A piano played somewhere and she began to sing. It was a beautiful song about a girl who lived alone in a castle, far away from her home.

The song reminded Beauty of her own home in the village. She felt very sad. She missed her family and cried bitterly for them. That night, at supper, she said to the Beast, "Oh, Beast! I heard a song about myself in the room of entertainment. I am missing my father. I want to see my brothers and sisters. Please let me visit them once!"

The Beast looked very sad at her request. Tears started flowing down his face. He said, "Why do you want to leave me alone, Beauty? I am an unhappy Beast ... I try to provide you with everything you want. What more do you want to be happy here? Do you want to leave because of me? Is it because I look so ugly?"

Beauty felt very bad for hurting the Beast. She softly said, "No, my dear Beast. I certainly do not find you ugly. I only want to visit my family once. Then, I promise I shall return to you."



To this, the Beast said, "Very well, then. I will fulfil all your wishes. Go to your room. You will find two travelling trunks there. Fill them with everything you want to take for your family."

Then, he gave her a ring. A green stone lay in the ring. He said, "Wear this ring. When you wish to go to your village, turn this around on your finger and you will be at your father's home. When you wish to return here, turn the ring again on your finger and say firmly, 'I wish to go back to my palace and see my Beast again.' You shall be here. Go to your village for two months. If you do not come back here after two months, I will die. Good night, Beauty." Then, he went away sadly. He did not ask her to marry him this time.

Beauty happily went up to her room. She filled the travelling trunks with clothes and jewels for her family. Then, she went to sleep. She dreamed of the green field again. However, the grass looked dry. Her dear Prince was lying down on the grass. He was crying. He also looked ill.

Beauty asked, "What is the matter, beloved?"



He looked at her and said, "How does it matter to you, cruel one? Surely, you do not care whether I live or die?"

Beauty cried, "Indeed I care! I have promised dear Beast, that I shall return to him. He is so kind! I would never break my promise to him ... It is not his fault that he looks frightening. I shall return to this castle and to you, dear one!"

Her Prince was no longer crying. He looked at her hopefully. Just then, the field misted over and the dream was broken.





Chapter Fourteen

The Cottage Again

Beauty could hear a lot of noise around her. It was not loud, as if coming from a distance. Her sleep was disturbed. "What is this noise? Normally the castle is so quiet! A golden bell jingles and wakes me up. What happened?" she wondered sleepily.

Slowly, she opened her eyes and found herself in a strange new room. It was large, but not large like her room in the castle. The two travelling trunks were placed beside her bed. It certainly was not part of the royal castle she had been living in. She sat up and heard footsteps coming towards her.

Just then, the door of the room flew open and the merchant entered. He saw Beauty sitting on her bed and stood still. He was so shocked, that he could not move for a few moments. Then, he exclaimed, "Beauty! My child!"

His voice carried to all other rooms. The other eleven children heard him. Together, they rushed in. Upon seeing her, they all shouted in joy. Their little sister was finally back! They hugged her and kissed her.

One of her sisters said, "We never thought we would see you again! Oh, Beauty, do tell us how you have been! Did that terrible Beast hurt you?"

Her oldest brother said, "Indeed it has been very dull without you, Beauty. We are so glad that you are back."

Beauty told them all about the Beast, the castle and its magic. She told them that the Beast was not terrible, but was, in fact, a very kind and gentle creature. Her family was amazed when she described the enchanting castle. They all



gasped when she told them about the room of entertainment. They were surprised to hear that the Beast was a gentle soul. Then, Beauty told them that she had not returned to live with them forever, but had to go back to the castle in two months. The family felt sad, but were happy that they had Beauty for two months, at least.

The merchant also told Beauty about himself. They were rich again, thanks to the riches he had brought back from the castle. They lived in the town, in a house larger and prettier than ever before.

The entire day, the family celebrated, being together again. They cooked a fancy lunch and ate it together, laughing and talking. In the evening, they played games and sang and danced together. Beauty felt very happy to be back with her family. After a long time, she was around so many people!

That night, after a rich and tasty dinner, Beauty went to the merchant and said, "Father, I want to tell you something." Then, she told him all about



her dreams, the mysterious Prince and the Beast's daily request to marry her.

The merchant thought deeply. Then, he said, "Beauty, my dear, you say that the Beast is a very nice being. The Prince asked you not to trust how people appear. He must mean that you can rescue him by marrying the Beast."

Beauty felt that her Father could be right. The Beast was indeed very nice, despite how he looked. But when she thought of her handsome Prince, she did not feel like marrying the Beast. However, Beauty did not think much about this matter, for she had two months to spend with her family! She forgot all about the Beast and the Prince in her joy.

However, as the days passed by, Beauty realised that living with her family was not so wonderful, after all. Sometimes, her sisters would even get annoyed at her for disturbing them. Thus, after one month, Beauty found herself missing the castle, its garden and her birds. Most of all, she missed her dear Beast. Here in the town,



she did not dream of her Prince even once and felt very sad without the dreams.

However, one night, Beauty had a terrible dream. She dreamed of being back in the castle. She was walking in the beautiful garden, when she heard low voices. She went in the direction of the voices. To her horror, she saw that it was the Beast. He was lying flat on the ground, groaning and moaning. His eyes were half closed and he looked very thin and weak. It looked like he was dying!

Just then, the beautiful lady who had appeared in Beauty's dreams earlier, appeared again. She looked as beautiful as ever. She said, "Ah, Beauty! You are back just in time. Any more delay would have killed the Beast."

At this moment, Beauty woke up. She started crying, for she was sure that her dream was real. She decided to return to the castle at once. She went to her father and her siblings and told them that she was going back to the Beast.



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Then, Beauty turned the Beast's green ring on her finger, and said, "I wish to go back to my palace and see my Beast again."

Then she fell asleep instantly, and only woke up to hear the clock saying, "Beauty, Beauty," twelve times in its musical voice. Beauty knew that she was back in the palace once more.





Chapter Fifteen

Beauty to the Rescue

Beauty ran down the stairs and into the dining hall, for this was the place where she saw her Beast. However, he did not appear. Beauty waited for a long time, but in vain. She rushed back to her room and saw her blue Robin. She said, "Robin! Please tell me where the Beast is. Oh, I am certain that you know where he is. Do tell me, otherwise he may die. I have to save my Beast's life!"

The Robin looked very sad. She said, "Beauty, my friend! It seems that you are too late. He has been very miserable without you. Every day, he would come to this room and ask me whether you had returned. Your absence made him sadder and

sadder. He became weak with sorrow. You know that this castle is enchanted. The Beast's sorrow affected everything. The grass of the garden is green no more, but brown. All flowers have dried. The birds have stopped chirping. The place looks very sad indeed."

Beauty was very frightened now. She ran upstairs and searched for the Beast in the castle. She called out his name, "Beast! Oh, dear Beast!" but no one answered her. The Beast was nowhere to be found.

Beauty rushed out of the castle, to the garden. It was still dark there, although the night was almost over. She ran through the path, she had just dreamed of. There, she saw the Beast lying flat on the grass. It was just like her dream! However, no sounds came from him. His eyes were closed.

Beauty started crying now. She bent down and shook him gently. However, the Beast did not move. He did not speak and did not open his eyes. Beauty started weeping loudly. "Oh,



my dear Beast! He is dead and it is my fault! I should have listened to the lady who appeared in my dreams!" she sobbed.

She sat beside the Beast. She took his head in her arms and put it on her lap. Softly, she stroked his hair and wept. However, a little while later, she thought that the Beast's chest moved. She looked down at once. She was right! His chest was rising and falling. The Beast was breathing. He was alive!

Beauty quickly wiped her tears with her scarf. Then, she ran towards the nearest fountain. She cupped her hands and took some water in them. Then, she ran back to the Beast and splashed the water on his face. He began moving more. She splashed some more water on his face. Now his eyes started opening.

Beauty was delighted! The Beast opened his eyes and smiled at her. She said, "Oh! You scared me, Beast! I was terrified, that you had died. Oh, I love you, my dear Beast! I did not know how much I loved you. I have missed you in the past



month. I was scared to death, when I saw you lying there!" Saying these words, Beauty hugged him and wept tears of joy. Just then, the sun rose. Its rays shone on the castle and the Beast.

The Beast slowly said, "Are you telling me the truth, Beauty? Do you really love someone as ugly as I am?"

Beauty smiled and said, "Yes, indeed, Beast. You are not ugly. You are the most handsome man I have ever known."

The Beast looked happy now. He stood up and said, "I was dying because I thought you would never return to the castle. I thought you would never love me. But you have come back! Forgive me for scaring you so, my love. Please go to your room and rest. I shall see you tomorrow."

And once more, the Beast walked away and disappeared. The grass was green again. All the flowers in the garden were in full bloom and the birds were chirping happily. The place looked very happy now.





Chapter Sixteen

The Beast and the Prince

Beauty looked at him walk away. She had never felt happier in her life! She smiled to herself for some time. Then, she realised that she was very tired, for she had had very little sleep the night before.

She walked back into the castle. It felt like home to her. She climbed the stairs and entered her room. She said to herself, "I am sure Father was right. The Prince indeed meant that I should not see how the Beast looks, for he has a heart of gold. This must rescue the Prince, now. I think he would appear in my dream as I sleep and tell me that he is free!"

Thinking these happy thoughts, Beauty slipped into her bed and fell asleep at once. She slept so soundly that she had no dreams at all. She slept for many hours. When she woke up, the sky outside her window was dark.

"I slept through the day! I must go to the dining hall. I feel so hungry!" Beauty exclaimed. Then, she opened her cupboard and took out the prettiest dress. It was a light pink gown made of soft satin. Little silver flowers were embroidered on it. Beauty put on the gown. The little silver flowers on it glittered as she moved. Then, she decorated her hair with pink ribbons and silver flowers. She wore the rose perfume and went downstairs.

Beauty saw that the Beast was waiting for her in the dining hall. He was also dressed very smartly. He wore a fine blue suit. A large rose was placed in the chest pocket of his suit. They looked at each other and smiled. Beauty said, "Good evening, dearest. You look handsome!"

The Beast replied, "Thank you, dear one. You look very beautiful, too."



Then, the two began eating supper. The meal was more delicious than ever. They talked and laughed together. The Beast asked her about her home and family. Beauty told him all about them.

By now, they had finished their meal. The two went out to the garden and walked together. Then, the Beast looked at her and said, "Beauty, will you marry me?"

Beauty softly replied, "Yes, dear Beast."

At that very moment, a burst of white light filled the garden. Colourful fireworks rose high up in the sky. Out of nowhere, thousands of fireflies appeared in the sky. They flew together and formed the sparkling words - 'Long live the Prince and his Bride.'

Beauty was amazed at this beautiful sight. She turned to the Beast to ask him what it meant. However, she was surprised once again. The Beast no longer stood there. It was her handsome Prince who stood by her side!



Suddenly, a golden chariot arrived. It stopped near them and two women stepped out of it. Beauty saw that one of them was the beautiful lady who appeared in her dreams. She was wearing white robes as usual. The other woman was wearing deep purple robes. She looked royal, like a queen. Beauty looked at the two women with respect. She did not know how to talk to them.

Then, the lady from her dreams said to the other woman, "Dear Queen, this is Beauty. She rescued your son from the terrible curse. Please allow them to get married."

The Queen replied, "Thank you, dear Fairy, for appearing in her dreams! I agree with all my heart that they be married."

Then, she turned to Beauty and said, "My son had been cursed by an evil witch and was turned into a Beast. Only true love could have rescued him. Thank you for saving my dear son!"

"Now," said the Fairy to Beauty, "I suppose you would like me to send for all your brothers and sisters to dance at your wedding?"



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Beauty happily said, "Yes!"

Soon after, all the men of the court appeared to congratulate the Prince. Suddenly, the whole castle was full of people! Beauty's family was also there.

The next day, Beauty and her Prince got married. All of them sang and danced joyfully. And they all lived happily ever after.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Jeanne-Marie
Le Prince de Beaumont

Beauty is a kind and gentle soul—beautiful not only to look at, but pure of heart and possessing great courage. Her father, once a rich merchant, loses his fortune at sea and the family comes upon hard times. And then one day, the merchant hears one of his ships had been saved! The entire family rejoices as he sets out to claim his lost fortune, promising to bring back gifts for all his children. But all Beauty asks for is a rose.

A strange twist of fate leads the merchant to an enchanted castle, where his every need is taken care of and great riches are at his disposal. But there is not a soul to be seen! Who is the master of the castle, where are the servants? The merchant finds out as he plucks a rose for Beauty. A frightening beast stands before him! And he says only Beauty can now save her father. What will happen now?

Read this enchanting fairy tale about a most unlikely love, about how the beauty of the heart conquers all that is bad and evil.

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